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ABSTRACT

This practicum was developed to encourage the at-risk urban elementary school student to read for pleasure daily. Participants listened to their favorite rap songs, wrote lyrics for their own rap songs, and then read the lyrics as a text. The practicum was performed in a neighborhood community recreation center that serves urban students from local elementary schools receiving Chapter 1 services and funds. Fifteen students from grades 2 through 6 were identified as at-risk and targeted for the program because they were at least two grade levels below national norms. Interviews with these students indicated that they did not enjoy reading or writing and never did either for pleasure. A review of the literature had suggested to the author that rap music might provide a key to literacy for these students. After writing their songs, students were asked to retell their messages and to read a self-selected book relating to their personal raps. For a variety of reasons, only 6 of the 15 completed the program, but students who did complete the program showed increased pleasure in reading. Increased reading proficiency was reflected in the grades of five of the six. Two appendixes contain the student survey and interview questions. (Contains 32 references.) (SLD)

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Using Rap Lyrics to Encourage At-Risk Elementary Grade Urban Learners to Read for Pleasure

by

Tharyll W. Morrow-Pretlow

Cluster 51

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Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed. D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL

This practicum, Using Rap Lyrics to Encourage At-Risk Elementary Grade Urban Learners to Read for Pleasure, took place as described.

Verifier: Dorothy Fields

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9-7-94
Date

This Practicum Report was submitted by Tharyll Pretlow under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Sept. 30, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Practicum II Report

Wm. W. Anderson
William W. Anderson, Ed.D.
Adviser

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I gratefully acknowledge Dr. William W. Anderson for the scholarly reviews and suggestions that enabled me to develop and implement this problem-solving strategy as a meaningful educational tool, thus contributing to the academic success of the targeted population for which it is intended.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
APPROVAL PAGE		ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT		iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iv
ABSTRACT		vi
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Community	2
	Writer's Work Setting and Role	3
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	
	Problem Description	4
	Problem Documentation	4
	Causative Analysis	8
	Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	10
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	
	Goals and Expectations	14
	Expected Outcomes	14
	Measurement of Outcomes	15
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	16
	Description of Selected Solution	22
	Report of Action Taken	25
V	RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Results	32
	Discussion	34
	Recommendations	37
	Dissemination	38

REFERENCES 39

Appendices

A STUDENT LITERACY INTEREST SURVEY 43

B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 46

ABSTRACT

Using Rap Lyrics to Encourage At-Risk Elementary Grade Urban Learners to Read for Pleasure. Tharyll W. M. Pretlow, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Urban Learner/Reading Strategy/Reading-Music/Academic Achievement/Reading Instruction/ Elementary Classroom/Reading Engagement.

This practicum was devised to encourage the at-risk elementary urban learner to voluntarily read daily. Based upon the read-sing concept, the participants listened to, wrote via dictation the lyrics of their personal favorite and popular rap songs, then read the lyrics as a text. The participants voluntarily wrote, read, and shared stories, poems, and passages of interest relating to the messages conveyed from the positive non-offensive rap lyrics.

The writer used demonstration, practicing, and performing as a literacy learning model with enabling and reinforcement activities; counted the time spent reading logged by each participant, the number of self-selected books read and shared, and the number of cohesive and meaningful sentences used in retelling a text; administered a pretest-posttest survey and a pre and post interview questionnaire.

Analysis of the data revealed that the participants are more likely to read if the text is relative to their urban culture. Based upon the positive posttest survey responses, the participants developed an awareness and appreciation of reading for pleasure.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

According to the 1990 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Reading Results, most African-American students do not read as well as whites, and most of these children are labeled as at-risk (Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, and Wasik, 1993). At-risk is defined as ones future in jeopardy due to the lack of required academic skills (Slavin & Madden, 1989). Madden et al. (1993) found that in the inner city where poverty is most obvious, school failure is endemic. These authors noted that children with early reading failure are most likely to become societal problems as well as dropping out of school.

Although Madden et al. (1993) reported that many students at-risk for reading failure are from low socio-economic households, a study by Mantzicopoulos, Morrison, Stone, and Setrakian (1992) revealed that this problem is also among children in middle income home situations. Even though some elementary students in middle income families are also at-risk for reading failure, the statistics are greater among poor minority children (Ebisutani, 1991).

Madden et al. (1993) also found that it is a matter of policy to use poor reading performance as a basis of retention. Norman and Zigmond (1980) noted that this is also a basis for special education placement.

Today's major educational goal is reading improvement (Clark & Fetsco, 1992), the cornerstone to academic achievement. Yet, despite curriculum restructuring and reading improvement efforts, reading scores reflect that many children continue to be at-risk for reading failure. Empirical data suggest that these children do not read for pleasure. Therefore, this practicum focused on encouraging the elementary grade urban learner at-risk of academic failure to read for pleasure, thus increasing the probability of academic success.

Description of the Community

This is an urban public school system composed of 64 elementary schools. These schools are largely located within predominately African-American low socio-economic communities. Most of the communities are composed of single family homes.

According to Chapter I data, there are 16,000 children and youths city-wide at risk due to reading failure

(Johnson, 1993). As an instructional leader, focusing in on one of the communities, the writer targeted 15 of the identified 16,000 students at-risk for reading failure from two different elementary schools, surrounding the same community. These 15 students, from grades second through sixth, received after school care from the same community recreational center.

Writer's Role and Work Setting

The writer taught in one of the 64 public urban elementary schools. The writer's assigned school serviced 400 African-American students with 375 of the students identified as at-risk and living in a majority low socio-economic community. Hence, the school received Chapter I services and funds.

Within the neighboring communities, there are other elementary schools similar to the writer's work setting. Therefore, so that a larger population will be affected, permission was granted to conduct this practicum in the identified neighborhood Community Recreation Center.

The writer, certified as a classroom teacher of grades first-sixth, assumed the additional role of educational leader under the auspices of the Department of Recreation.

Chapter II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Fifteen elementary students from grades second through the sixth were identified as at-risk. They were considered in most cases as slow readers. The empirical evidence showed that they did not spend time in school or out reading. These students did not read for pleasure.

Problem Documentation

Evidence that supports the problem that the targeted participants were not reading for pleasure includes interview responses, survey findings, test scores, as well as empirical data.

The 1993 District-wide Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills results on word attack skills, vocabulary, comprehension, and language expression reflected that the targeted participants seemed to lack basic reading skills or just were not relating to the instruction. These scores indicated that the 15 targeted participants were below the national norm by two grade levels. The test results seemed to indicate that the targeted participants were

not applying word attack skills nor were they demonstrating the ability to comprehend word text.

Direct teacher observations supported by the "reports in the literature show that slow readers do not read for pleasure" (Nell, 1988, p. 9). According to Routman (1991), students must be allowed the responsibility of choosing their own books, thus through self-selected reading, overcome the obstacles of the text. However, RIF Books (Reading Is Fundamental Books) were given to the targeted students three times during the school year. Each student is permitted to choose any book of their choice, yet, the RIF program did not seem to persuaded the identified students that reading was worth their while and pleasurable.

Most books selected from the RIF table were bright, colorful, and high interest low vocabulary text activity booklets. Books such as Charlotte's Web, Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Aesop's Fables, and Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears were most often not selected. The distribution of RIF Books did not motivate the targeted participants to engage in reading for pleasure. The writer observed these self-selected RIF books discarded in wall lockers and desks. The writer was constantly insisting that the books were at least taken home and shared with family members. When

the students were asked if they owned a book, even a self-selected RIF book, unfortunately, only 1 of the 15 identified students owned a RIF book.

The responses to a composite of general literacy interest items and interview responses, in which the writer interviewed each student (Routman, 1991), indicated that the targeted participants were not relating to the instruction nor did they enjoy reading or writing. Without being directed, they almost never read for any reason or saw a need to write creatively. (see Appendix A for Student Literacy Interest Survey Items and see Appendix B for the Interview Questions)

When read the fairy tale Rumpelstiltskin, the targeted participants seemed unable to retell what was read in that their sentences were not cohesive or meaningfully related to the text (King, 1989). They were also unable to predict an alternative outcome to the fairy tale, and they were unable to form an opinion from the text for at least one character.

Each targeted participant was allowed to select a copy of a fairy tale to read. Only three of the students at least looked through their booklet. Subsequently, the fifteen targeted participants were allowed to choose their

own type of reading text and then to retell what they read. The students could have selected any type of reading material such as mystery, short novel, comic strip, activity, or how to books. However, none of the fifteen targeted participants selected any reading materials, nor could they give a title of any short story, fairy tale, or comic strip, on demand. When asked why they had not read, replies ranged from they did not want to read, they forget to read to they did not like to read. When interviewed, each student indicated that reading was boring, not enjoyable, there was no time to read, they hated to write because it was too much trouble, and oral reading was embarrassing. However, not one of the children admitted that he/she was unable to read or was not really taught how to read. One child stated that when she reads, her "head hurts." The need for eye glasses was ruled out by doctors, according to the parent.

A study by Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) found that a reliable indicator of reading achievement from grades second through fifth was the time the children spent out of school reading. Therefore, the 15 targeted participants were asked to record the start and stop time spent for pleasure reading along with their everyday

activities, during a three week period. Neither of the targeted participants recorded time in which they read for pleasure. However, the students spent, on the average, 30 minutes daily listening to their favorite tunes on the radio, in addition to the 2 hours and 30 minutes each Thursday and Sunday night spent watching television sitcom, such as in Living Color, Living Single, Married With Children, The Simpsons, and Townsend's Televison.

Causative Analysis

The writer suggested several causes for the problem of the urban learner at-risk for academic failure not reading for pleasure. The educational research in the 1970s (cited in Anderson et al. 1988) established that reading achievement depends upon how children spend their time in school. "Opportunities for students to read self-selected books is an indispensable part of a balanced reading program" (Routman 1991, p. 41). However, in view of the findings, it seemed as though the targeted participants' school day curriculum did not provide time for independent reading opportunities other than drill and practice activities.

Imposed reading seemed to have lead the targeted

participants to disengage from the literary process (Nell, 1988). A competitive learning environment as well as a lack of basic literacy skills development were also suggested as possible underlining causes of resistance to reading or even literacy disengagement altogether. Empirical observations revealed that the school support of pleasure reading did not seem to extend beyond the distribution of RIF books and the once a week for twenty minutes D.E.A.R. time period (Drop Everything And Read).

The targeted participants may have experienced that language and literacy learning was not presented as purposeful and meaningful to their social context/urban culture. Therefore, their individual interests within the scope of learning were not build upon. Some elementary grade students seemed unable to make the connection between spoken and written language (King, 1989).

The writer also noticed, within her work setting, that the school budget, even with Chapter I funds, was not sufficient to provide economically deprived students, in most cases, the additional language experiences required to compensate for the lack of home experiences. The local school may ignore this type of student need if the central office does not allocate appropriations for the arts.

Consequently, it seemed as though some of these students had withdrawn from reading and the other academic skills by third grade (Madden et al. 1993).

Based upon parent and teacher conferences held by the writer, in some cases, the lack of parental support made it difficult for the child to distinguish the home-school relationship in their learning process. In some low socioeconomic homes, reading seemed not to have been an after school priority by the parents.

Good writers are good readers first (Glasser, 1992). However, when a child does show a spark of interest in a book, although writing is indispensable, we saddle the child with the task of writing a book report. This also has perpetuated a lack of reading for pleasure among some students.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Various domains/data bases were searched for literature on the problem of reading failure in the elementary grades. The domains reviewed included psychology in the schools, such as the search for why children don't learn and the sociological view of at-risk children from low socio-economic homes in relationship to parental support or

involvement in the child's learning process. The arts were reviewed for effects on language and literacy learning. The computer and software industry was touched upon for causes, views and solutions. However, the computer industry suggested causes only mirrored those already identified.

The literature review revealed the generalizability of the problem of reading failure in the elementary grades. Since many elementary grade children are at-risk due to reading failure, the problem is documented as a national educational problem (Clark & Fetsco, 1992). Therefore, other professionals have written about the problem of encouraging the student at-risk to engage in the literary process (Ebisutani, 1991). The documentation of the problem ranged from program evaluations for preventing early school failure (Slavin, Karweit, & Wasik, 1993; Clark & Fetsco, 1992), research funded by the American Educational Research Association on the opportunity for at-risk children to learn (Stevens & Grymes, 1993) to Glasser's (1992) psychological perspectives on teaching for students to learn.

Implications for teacher re-training, re-designing the curriculum, and improvements in reading instruction provided to at-risk students have been discussed. If

teachers are to handle the stress of teaching today's disadvantaged inner-city minority children, the veteran teacher as well as the new teacher must be prepared and trained to teach the urban learner (Stallings & Quinn, 1992).

Stevens and Grymes (1993) conducted a study to determine why poor and minority students are most likely to fail. They found that many of the elementary grade students are not provided outside or home motivational instructional support that replaces any short-comings that might exist in the school. Most parental support or involvement is perfunctory, if any, and does not extend beyond ensuring that homework has the appearance of being complete or correct (Stevens & Grymes, 1993).

Neither curriculum or instruction meet the needs of most of today's children (Bennett, 1988; Glasser, 1992). Both Smith (1984) and Holdaway (1986) point out that children are not receiving the literacy instruction with the relevant demonstration required for them to become literate. Empirical data show that reading/literacy is not taught as a life skill. Specifically, reading skills are not taught as transferable and applicable skills relative to the students' environment.

Madden et al. (1993) found that prevention and intervention programs are not multi-year programs due to cost or shortage of trained teachers. Therefore, the strategies are not continued through out the child's elementary school years. In general, most reading improvement projects are not follow-through school-wide programs (Madden et al. 1993).

The most obvious cause for many students not reading, emphasized in the published literature, is that they lack basic reading development skills as well as an interest in the process. Hence, they do not know how to read or write. The Madden, et al. (1993) study revealed that inner-city children that have not acquired substantial basic reading and comprehensive skills prior to leaving the latter primary grades are at-risk of academic failure. Ebisutani (1991) contends that, in most cases, the schools do not motivate these students to read outside of school, i.e., to engage in the literary process in the home. In essence, based upon the literature, it is safe to admit that the curriculum does not address the educational needs, the social context, nor support the learning process of the very students it is developed and structured to guide through the formal educational process.

Chapter III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goal and Expectation

The following goal and expectation was projected for this practicum: the participants will voluntarily spend time reading. Thus, it is expected that the participants will demonstrate reading improvement and enjoyment. As a residual long term expectation, the probability that these urban learners will succeed academically will be increased.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

Outcome 1 - Fifteen of the 15 participants will voluntarily read in the home for at least 10 minutes a day over a minimum of three weeks.

Outcome 2 - Ten of the 15 participants will voluntarily check out at least 3 books from the library, retelling the text of each in cohesive and meaningful sentences.

Outcome 3 - Fifteen of the 15 participants will reflect

that they enjoy reading by responding Yes to each of the 10 posttest survey items.

Measurement of Outcomes

Nonreactive measures are used as measurements of the outcomes. Each participant maintains a daily activity log (Anderson et al. 1988). The amount of time during each day over a minimum three week period spent voluntarily reading are totaled. The writer maintains a wall chart recording the reported number of purposeful and meaningful voluntary library visits of each participant. These visits are counted. The number of self-select books checked out during each visit (Routman, 1991) are counted. Using the Brown and Cambourne Retelling Procedure to verify that the books were actually read, the number of cohesive and meaningful sentences used in relationship to the text (King, 1989) are counted. Using the Student Literacy Interest Survey/reading survey (Routman, 1991) to indicate reading enjoyment or attitude change, each participant's Yes responses are counted.

Chapter IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Given the problem that the targeted elementary grade urban learners did not read in school or out, the published literature provided research study reports as well as evaluation findings on strategies designed to solve the problem of how to encourage the elementary child to read as well as how to teach children to read (Madden et al. 1993). These strategies range from multi-year prevention programs, one-on-one tutoring programs, teaching reading as a decision-making process, and reading/singing methods of instruction.

Atkinson and Jackson (1992) pointed out that the Office of Education Research and Improvement's Center for the Study of Reading provides a detail analysis of how research on reading has contributed to innovative programs, such as the labor intensive Reading Recovery Program developed in 1970, the 1987 implementation of Success For All, the 10-year field initiated Reciprocal Teaching Program, and Chapter One. Yet, every year the number of students at-risk for reading failure increases nationally as indicated by

standardized test scores. Reading Recovery, an early intervention program, is designed to supplement the regular reading instruction in the classroom. The specially trained reading recovery teacher approach is to encourage the children to read by building on the knowledge and skill they already possess. Based upon results, in 1987 Reading Recovery was certified by the National Diffusion Network as an effective program and remains effective although costly (Atkinson & Jackson, 1992).

Success For All, as described by Madden et al. (1993), is a multi-year prevention and intervention program designed to ensure that every student economically deprived will succeed in acquiring basic skills in the early grades. Success was defined as reading at or near grade level by grade 3 and maintaining this achievement to the end of elementary school (Madden et al. 1993). However, the Durrell Oral Reading scale data used to summarize the longitudinal effects of Success For All for the period 1990-1991, indicated that the outcome was not achieved in that all targeted third graders at-risk for reading failure remained at least one year below grade level (Madden et al. 1993).

The Reciprocal Teaching Program, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, tested

the theory that strategic reading is based upon the skills that define comprehension. Bergman and Schuder (1993) evaluated SAIL-the Students Achieving Independent Learning Program. According to Bergman and Schuder, SAIL teaches at-risk students to become successful readers by showing them learning to read is a decision making process, i.e., showing them how to read strategically. However, the Snowling (1992) study supports the belief that children who are taught letter-sound correspondences and the use of context clues to read unfamiliar words in meaningful text will develop a firm foundation in reading acquisition.

The Mantzicopoulos et al. (1992) study of the SEARCH and TEACH Tutoring Approach on middle-class students at-risk for reading failure focused only on perceptual remediation. The program premise is that weak perceptual skills play a major role in reading failure. Although Mantzicopoulos et al. were "skeptical about the effectiveness of both perceptual remediation and isolated phonics instruction" (p. 585), the at-risk students scored at or above the national norm. However, it is noted that their reading performance was below that of the not at-risk children. Never the less, there was no indication that those children

spent time reading for pleasure. However, the authors noted that other successful tutoring models use materials that promote the discover of the personal value of reading. Holdaway (1986) emphasized a method of instruction of using familiar and favorite text as a medium to teach reading so that the instruction will be purposeful and enjoyable, as well as effective. Ebisutani (1991) contends that teachers must create an environment that students can learn to enjoy learning in addition to an environment where fluency in reading can be developed.

The literature search in the domain of psychology revealed the McIntyre and Cowell (1984) evaluation which discussed the affects of music on academic performance and behavior with special education children. The study dealt with the playing of music to induce a positive learning environment, thus promoting learning.

In the domain of the arts, Ebisutani (1991) discussed the affects of music on reading, oral language, and writing abilities in that music, theoretically, can be used as an alternative method for teaching and developing basic reading and comprehension skills. McDonald (1975) found that musical text helped to develop auditory discrimination skills and correct pronunciation of vowel sounds. He found

that visual skills were also developed by writing (copying) the lyrics to build sight vocabulary and knowledge of letter sounds.

Urbancic and Vizmuller (1981) promote the use of popular music in the foreign language classroom. Jalongo and Bromley (1984) use of picture books with song lyrics found that familiar, favorite, or catchy song lyrics can play a special role in the reading instruction for all types of learners. McCarthy (1985) showed how action songs, because they are highly repetitive and the simple melody, help build good listening, speaking, and singing skills that are the basis of reading ability to develop word recognition skills, comprehension, reading study skills, and literary appreciation in learning disabled children. Baechtold and Algier (1986) also found that repetition in musical context can increase student motivation to learn as well as student memory of the vocabulary. Jalongo and Bromley also noted that children are attracted to particular beats, rhythms, tones, and melodies of certain songs as well as the appeal of certain musical text or lyrics.

The writer found that the work of Newsom (1979), the work of Hicks (1987), and Ridout (1992) were the most impressive of the strategies cited due to the use of songs

rhythms that are associated with the child's social context. Newsom theorized that popular music could be used to motivate remedial readers by using music that reflect the students social context. Therefore, Newsom implemented a motivational reading program using rock'n roll music. Teenagers were given song sheets with the printed lyrics and were instructed to read along silently while the accompanying music played. Newsom found that this program increased the students' vocabulary, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and most importantly, fostered voluntary reading while eliminating attitudinal and motivational problems. Similarly, Ridout (1992) reported that her Reading/Singing Strategy using favorite songs sung by popular artists promoted word recognition, discussion, and comprehension skills in a group of sixth graders as well as motivated them to read.

A paper presented by Hicks (1987) at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication revealed that teaching inner-city African-American kindergarten students body parts by using "rap" musical rhythms was an effective method of instruction for oral language development.

Groff (1977) pointed out that with respect to the

use of music to motivate as well as affect reading ability, the literature is inconclusive. However, he somewhat concludes that given the number of students at-risk for reading failure in the nation's schools, any innovation method of teaching that could enhance their reading ability or encourage them to read would be welcomed.

Most of the solutions presented focused on skill building rather than motivating students to read. Never the less, ideas were gleaned from Holdaway, Newsom, Ridout, and Hicks. Thus, a solution was derived.

Description of Selected Solution

The targeted participants were not spending time outside of school reading. They were not reading for pleasure. The published literature advocates the use of popular musical text in aiding in the development of basic reading and comprehension skills. The various opinions expressed are that music exposure can increase children's willingness to listen, music creates a positive attitude in most children which promotes learning, and song lyrics can help the children to become aware of the meaning of individual words. Therefore, this practicum, a method of instruction, was designed using Rap lyrics as a medium

to encourage the elementary grade urban learner at-risk to read for pleasure.

Based upon the premise that children who don't read for pleasure are mostly children who are at-risk for academic failure, the solution strategy encompasses a variety of modified approaches. The Holdaway Natural Learning Program Models (1986), the Brown and Cambourne (1987) Retelling Procedure, the Newsom (1979) and the Ridout (1992) reading/singing strategies, as well as the Hicks (1987) rap music concept as a method of instruction were used in the development of the Rap to Read for Pleasure Program. Rap to Read, henceforth refers to the solution strategy. Rap to Read, a 32 week program, was conducted after school in a community recreational center.

The solution strategy is described as follows: Activity 1 - After listening to Rap song lyrics, the participants are encouraged to work in collaborative teams while writing the lyrics of their popular favorite Rap (This activity may take up to three weeks, one hour weekly, in order to write the entire Rap lyrics to one song). Activity 2 - The participants read the lyrics then retells what the song (text) using cohesive sentences meaningful in relationship to the song. Using the lyrics as a text,

the participants form opinions about the rap message, make predictions based on those opinions, thus, orally present their personal meaning of the song and their feelings toward the message the author is conveying to the group (this activity may take up to two weeks).

Activity 3 - Spin-off notes taken on 6x9 index cards during Activity 2 will be used to compose a rap. The participants illustrate or represent his/her message (rap) in a drawing and/or dance (this activity is planned for three weeks).

Activity 4 - The participants are tasked with reading a book/story/passage from a book that relates to their personal rap message. The participants are expected to voluntarily visit the library during this activity. The number of purposeful and meaning library visits are recorded as well as the number of books read/shared/compared and evaluated (Brown and Cambourne, 1987). Each book is shared using cohesive and meaningful sentences. (Allow six weeks).

Activity 5 - The participants evaluate their self-selected book, either recommending or not the book to others, and read favorite passages to the group (allow 2 weeks). Independent book reviews are on-going. The participants review individual logs and tally the time spent reading. Activities 1-5 are repeated for each Rap song. Two Rap

songs will take thirty-two weeks.

Report of Action Taken

Rap to Read was implemented by presenting the project as an idea to the participants. The participants accepted the idea, thus becoming shareholder in the measured success or failure of the project. Each participant made contributions and were included in getting ready, planning the sessions, and the evaluation of the project.

Participant development, i.e., the getting ready sessions (2 weeks) operated on the assumption that all children want to succeed in school and the concept of making each participant a stakeholder. During these sessions, the facilitator (the writer) explained the purpose for Rap to Read, the Student Literacy Interest Survey, and the Interview Questionnaire prior to the implementation. The facilitator used the participants' responses to initiate a question and answer session. The facilitator addressed and answered the participants' questions relative to Rap to Read and literacy interest. Although participation is not school/teacher imposed, rules and boundaries were developed to include the use of positive, non-violent and non-offensive Rap lyrics at all times.

The facilitator required that parental consent must be given in writing if a participant favors a Rap with even the slightest hint of profanity or sexual suggestions, and stressed that dancing be performed in good taste. By chance, during those sessions a Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) was airing the Ghost Writer episodes Don't stop the music which presented rap lyrics that conveyed a positive message. The participants were asked to watch. Each participant was given a copy of the Official Ghost Writer Team magazine from Children's Television Workshop that contained the rap lyrics and activities to help the participants to write their personal rap.

The facilitator allowed the participants opportunities for input on the session day, planning for the refreshments, and making program activity suggestions. The participants decided which of their favorite and popular Rap songs would be used for the project. The facilitator provided the refreshments as well as the Rap music tapes, supplies, and audio equipment.

The facilitator planned for a group field trip to library. During this visit, the facilitator acquainted the participants on the enjoyment of books and visiting a Library using the 30 minute "Read to discover" video

developed by the Chrysler Learning Connection. During the video the participants were asked to spot the 4 reasons for reading (read for fun, facts, help with decision making, and to promote clearer thinking) revealed in the video skit. In order for the participants to obtain a library card, an application was given to each participant. The participants' parents were asked to completed and returned the card application to the facilitator or directly to neighborhood branch library.

The participants were allowed to decorate their individual folders, make rules for set-up and clean-up, as well as handling and care for the Rap tapes, cassette player, crayons, pencils, the Jiffy Charts, magic markers, and to design a wall chart to record the number of times each participant voluntarily shared self-selected passages, stories, or poems, in addition to meaningful library visits.

During the Rap to Read listening-reading activities, under the guidance of the facilitator, the participants wrote the lyrics via dictation (listening and writing the lyrics as the song played) as did demonstrated by the facilitator, using the Jiffy Chart. The facilitator ensured that the each word was clearly heard and the words were written correctly. In order to re-use words from the rap,

retelling or discussions that were unfamiliar, the participants recorded on their personal 6x9 index cards the words that they, individually, were unable to spell correctly or could not distinguish the meaning via context clues.

When the Rap lyrics dictation was completed, the participants read the words to the song, discussed their individual feelings, then created a rap song in response to the message or feeling conveyed. In a meaningful relationship to the lyrics (text), the facilitator demonstrated the retelling procedure. Spin-off ideas for new Raps were written on 6x9 index cards so that the participants could share their individual creations. Their ideas were expressed in picture, drama, dance, poetry, and or song. Each participant maintained an activity log for 32 weeks. This log reflected time spent on assigned reading as well as voluntary reading away from school.

In addition to the listening-writing-reading activities, the facilitator provided each participant with a self-selected RIF Book to share with the group. The participants were responsible for voluntarily visiting the library at least three times during the 32 week practicum period to check out WEB (Wonderfully Exciting

Books), coined by Routman (1991), that related to their rap, spin-off, own experiences, or personal interest. Initially, the participants were not sharing and comparing books as expected. Therefore, using the Scholastic Storyworks promotion to publish selected children's book reviews selected in order to motivate each of the participants to read, share, and recommend books was most beneficial. Each participant was permitted to have their individual book reviews submitted for publication and selection. To date, we have not received acknowledgment of receipt for their reviews.

The underlining educational aim was to promote literacy development. Therefore, the Holdaway (1986) Natural Literacy Program Models were used as the Rap to Read sessions guide. The Later Literacy Program Model: the facilitator held student conferences, discussions, instructed independent and group reading and writing, in addition to enabling, and reinforcing (Holdaway, 1986). The Developmental Learning Sequence: the participants shared by demonstrating, participants observing demonstrations, participating in questioning, as well as doing by role-playing/practicing and performing (Holdaway, 1986). The facilitator induced active involvement within the group,

displayed reading and writing in genuine ways by instructing, arranging, and providing an environment conductive to sharing by enabling and supporting as well as accepting, enjoying, monitoring, and recording (Holdaway, 1986).

A program evaluation and a progress check was conducted during the 16th week/midpoint of the project as well as the 32nd week/end of the project. The participants complained that the program, 32 weeks, was too long. They made the suggestions for incentives. Therefore, each participant that completed the program received a tape cassette of their personally selected rap songs. Bonus treats were given each time a book, passage, and short story was shared or a meaningful rap was created and shared. The participants used this time to reflect and evaluate their individual progress.

During the 32nd week, the participants independently completed the post Student Literacy Survey Interest Survey; the facilitator conducted the post interview using the Interview Questions. The participants compared their pretest and posttest responses. The facilitator counted the number of Yes responses circled on the survey. The participants totaled their time spent reading. The

number of self-selected WEB read were counted. The number of shared books and passages via retelling were also counted. Self-directed library visits were counted.

The facilitator evaluated the program for strength and weaknesses of the strategy. The Interview Questionnaire responses and the Student Literacy Interest Survey pretest-posttest responses were used to determine program effectiveness. To determine learning validity of the strategy, the participants wrote either a rap, poem, or short story detailing their pre and post feelings about reading, what was learned, and their perspective on the project.

Chapter V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The Rap to Read program was designed to encourage the urban learners at-risk to voluntarily read daily for pleasure. Fifteen elementary school students from grades second through sixth were identified to participate in the project. Although they attended different public elementary schools, they received after care from the same public community recreational center. During the summer months, they attended the same recreational center summer camp program.

Due to attrition and other unexpected circumstances over the 8 month practicum period, only 6 of the 15 students completed the program. Even though the identified number of participants decreased, the 6 participants that remained in Rap to Read did obtain the projected standard of measure for each outcome. In reviewing the end of school year report card of each of the 6 remaining participants, the second semester/fourth advisor progress report period grade did reflect reading improvement for 5 of the 6 participants. Additionally, those participants that were affected by

the solution strategy validated the successfulness of employing the positive social factors of the urban learners' culture as a medium to encourage literacy engagement. This use of rap lyrics as a method of instruction generated a positive effect on oral language development as well as literacy learning.

The expected outcome and the results for the practicum were as follows: Outcome #1 - Fifteen of the 15 participants will voluntarily read in the home at least 10 minutes a day over a minimum of three weeks. This outcome was achieved in that the 6 remaining participants read in the home at least ten minutes a day over a minimum of three weeks. Of these six participants, each read up to thirty minutes a day for eight weeks or more.
Outcome #2 - Ten of the fifteen participants will voluntarily check out at least three books from the library, retelling the text of each in cohesive and meaning sentences. This outcome was achieved in that the 6 remaining participants voluntarily checked out at least three books and retold the text of each book in cohesive and meaningful sentences. Of these six participants, each were self-directed to visit the library and checked out no less that 5 books in a three month period. They also

wanted information on how to register for the Superintendent's Gold Medal Readers Program for students who read the greatest number of books for school year 1994-1995.

Outcome # 3 - Fifteen of the 15 participants will reflect that they enjoy reading by responding Yes to each of the 10 posttest Student Literacy Interest Survey items. The outcome was achieved in that the 6 remaining participants responded Yes to each of the posttest survey items. Of these six participants, each wrote either a poem, rap, short story, or essay expressing literacy interest and enjoyment.

Discussion

The published literature recognizes the effectiveness of using popular musical text as a motivational method to teach reading content. The long term effects of this method can be compared to the effectiveness of using popular and familiar musical text to teach English as a second language. Hence, if other countries can use popular American musical text to teach English, then surely the strategy as it relates to the child's social context may be as equally effective promoting literacy success in those

students at-risk due to reading failure.

The project concept of using Rap as a medium can be used in other subject areas where the need to motivate and encourage the student to engage in the course material in order to acquire knowledge sustainment. Rap Music is universal as well as versatile. The National Science Foundation has sponsored PBS television musical videos using Rap songs devised to teach that opposites attract and other scientific facts to children. Mathematics teachers often use Rap in teaching difficult mathematical concepts, such as the Metric System. Some early childhood teachers also use Rap in introducing counting numbers as well as the Rap beat to teach or revitalize nursery rhymes.

The Rap song lyrics used in Rap to Read provided the text of personal knowledge that related to each child no matter what the socio-economic family status. This text of personal interest used familiar words and was favored by the participants over other types of music, excluding today's popular love songs sung by African American artists. Many inner-city children seem to relate to the messages being conveyed in Rap music using Hip-Hop and Go-Go rhythms and beats. Rap songs seem to be an influencing factor in the sub-culture of many urban learners, especially the

low socioeconomic inner-city African American child. This concept is also appropriate for all children, although the focus was on the African-American children at-risk of failure.

The Holdaway (1986) structure of natural learning as a basis for literacy instruction was most appropriate for Rap to Read. The Holdaway Later Literacy Program for grades second/third through sixth offered engagement of choice using a common text. The participants' self-selection of Rap songs, independent reading and writing exploration activities relative to the lyrics, coupled with performance, and group sharing of outcomes-mutual motivation (Holdaway, 1986) seemed to provide each participant with a demonstrated amount of encouragement.

The Holdaway Developmental Learning Sequence and the Early Literacy Program Models were also most appropriate for the participants in that each participant was allowed the opportunity to observed demonstrations, participated via sharing, role-play via practice, and performed via doing. Using the developmental models seemed to ensure that the participants were afforded opportunities to interact, demonstrate language and literacy development, as well as a sense of achievement as they were encouraged

to read for pleasure or personal interest.

Recommendations

Rap to Read should not be implemented unless the targeted students understand the purpose and process of the program. They must be shareholders planning for the program implementation as well as stakeholders in the outcomes. In order to engage today's children in the literary process, the children must be a shareholder in their learning to the extent that the classroom teacher will use their personal interests and sub-cultures as mediums to encourage them in literacy learning. In addition, the spark of interest is often snuffed out before the pleasure of reading can be established. Therefore, it is suggested that the teachers as well as parents must first establish the desire and thrust to read within the student/child, as schools help parents to encourage their children to become readers (Atteberry, 1992). With this thrust for pleasure reading comes the reading process, attention, and comprehension (Nell, 1988).

Reading programs such as Rap to Read should be an integral part of the instructional school day and reinforced via accountable after school home self-selected reading

assignments for weekly classroom sharing sessions. Many elementary teachers may need to restructure their teaching to a natural learning method of instruction as a basis for encouraging reading (Holdaway, 1986). The use of Rap lyrics is a natural learning text as a medium for literacy instruction.

Dissemination

A copy of the Rap to Read Description and Action Taken sections will be distributed to each participant's classroom teacher and the Chapter I teacher in each of the two schools. Interest which was shared by the principals was lost when they realized that the project primary intent was to encourage pleasure reading and not increasing test scores, even though it is a residual of the practicum.

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Appendix A

STUDENT LITERACY INTEREST SURVEY

STUDENT LITERACY INTEREST SURVEY

Pre Read to Student- Midpoint - Post Read by Student

1. I own at least one book that is not a text book.
   YES **NO**

2. I enjoy reading.
   YES **NO**

3. A parent, guardian, or older sibling reads to me often.
   YES **NO**

4. Reading is not imposed but supported. Therefore, I choose to read.
   YES **NO**

5. I collect R.I.F. Books.
   YES **NO**

6. I can name at least 5 books I have read.
   YES **NO**

7. I can retell what is read.
   YES **NO**

8. I want to be a fluent reader.
   YES **NO**

9. I enjoy creative writing.
   YES **NO**

10. I have a journal diary and write in it daily.

YES NO

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you spend your time after school?

2. How often do you read voluntarily? How many minutes a day do you use to read? How many days in the week do you try to spend reading?

3. Do you enjoy reading? Express your feelings about reading. Name story titles of recently read books.

4. What are your interest? Why do you read? How can learning to read and reading fluently benefit you?

5. What are the reasons for you not reading voluntarily?

6. What is most difficult about learning to read?

7. When does reading instruction work for you?

8. How would you make learning to read and reading fun?

9. What was/is your most difficult reading assignment?

10. Was this assignment as well as the reading instruction of interest to you? Could you relate the instruction to a personal experience or a necessity in your life.

11. How often do you write? How do you feel about journal writing and creative writing?

12. Speaking, writing and reading are connected. Tell me how are they connected.